

Los Lunas, NM – On Friday, Harry Teague, New Mexico’s only representative on the U.S. House Veterans Affairs Committee, unveiled a draft proposal for a “Veterans Bill of Rights” during his address to the Joint Session of the New Mexico Veterans of Foreign Wars Convention in Albuquerque.

Teague outlined the proposal in his remarks:

“Today, I want to take this special moment to announce the draft of a plan I hope to spend many years working to implement and honor.

It’s called the “Veterans Bill of Rights.” It’s based on the idea that your service and sacrifice confers upon you rights and a dignity that should never be reduced or taken away. It’s intended to guide Congress as it seeks to improve benefits and services for veterans. And I look forward to working with many of you to improve and develop this document.

We need a Veterans Bill of Rights that recognizes that:

1. You deserve access to quality health care. It must be convenient, it must be close, and it must be the best in the world.
2. You shouldn't have to bargain for your benefits, they are yours by right. They shouldn't be unfairly taxed, you shouldn't have to wait, and you shouldn't have to drown in paper and bureaucracy to get the benefits you earned.
3. You are provided a "health homecoming" from theater. We must improve health and mental health screenings, provide adequate time for family and social adjustment, ensure help and treatment aren't far away, and hold employers to their commitments.
4. You deserve the most of American economic opportunity. To me that means a good job, free college or training, secure housing, and small business assistance.
5. You deserve the right to mental health, just like physical health. We will identify the invisible wounds of war and treat them with every resource at our disposal.
6. Every veteran should be honored and remembered with dignity. You get the medals you earned, proper markers and burials, and the appreciation of a grateful nation.
7. Your family and dependents get access to much of the same care and benefits you get. Being a veteran should mean your wives, husbands, and children receive the benefits you earned for them.
8. Finally, you have the right fly the flag and defend it from desecration. You fought for the American flag. No one can stop you from displaying it, and it should be against the law to mistreat it.

I intend to keep my sleeves rolled up and to keep on working to get a real Veterans Bill of Rights through Congress.

You all know how Washington works so it might take a while – but as long as I live, I'll be fighting for YOU -- the men and women who defended this country that we love so much."

Congressman Teague has made veterans' issues a top priority since he was elected to Congress, helping to secure advanced appropriations funding for the VA and introducing legislation aimed at addressing and reducing the impact of mental health issues like PTSD have on the lives of returning veterans. Recently, his bill to provide per diem and lodging payments to caregivers who accompany veterans on hospital visits was signed in to law as part of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act.

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